acceptance Speech Gay Alliance Leadership

Good afternoon everyone. It is great to be here – Bess & I are very touched by this recognition and beyond surprised...

Not long ago we played our phone messages and heard Sue Cowell say that Bess & I were being nominated for a community service award at the equality leadership conference... we were shocked...we were being outed as activists...what did this mean...we went thru some stages of thinking about this phenomenon...

From Scott Fearing we had learned all about the Cass Model – that is the complicated process of how LGBT people come to terms with who they are and their sexual identity. Our response to Sue's message exactly paralleled the Cass Model.

First we experienced identity confusion - who us? Community Activists? No, no, this is a mistake...we're not really activists, we were just experimenting... Sue called the wrong number.

Next came comparison - could we be activists?...we are awfully busy...our house is a wreak and we neglect our friends...but we are nothing like the real activists we know - Todd Plank, Susan Jordan, Ralph Carter, Teresa & Darla, Ove Ovemeyer, Jo & Christine Meleca Voight, Pam Barres, Evelyn Bailey and so many others...they are the real activists not us...

The next stage was identity tolerance - alright, we probably are activists but it is not our fault - Todd Plank made us marriage ambassadors, It was Reverend Jim Mulcahy's idea for Bess & I to get married publicly in Washington Square. Scott Fearing & Jeanne Gainsburg sent us out as Gay Alliance speakers! And Tom Privitere got us hooked on the really addictive stuff...labor unions and politics.

Finally Bess & I moved into identity acceptance and pride- yup we're activists, real pot-stirrers, there is no going back for us. Apparently we don't have to come out of the closet about it...people seem to have figured it out...

So we are honored to accept this award. It did make us think about what is it we do and why it matters. We are just ordinary people, not naturally gifted speakers or writers or organizers. As Bess puts it"we ain't real smart but we can lift heavy things"...What we do bring to the table is passion for

Social Justice and the willingness to be visible. And we are getting pretty good at that. We have had wonderful mentoring along the way and we have learned a couple important concepts that have helped us be effective:

1. Social change is all about establishing relationships - one person at a time. So Bess & I create visibility and relationship in every way we can - make protest signs for hotel workers, county child care workers, the public defenders group, anyone who needs signs. We show up at their events and take photos to share. We walk their picket lines, we phone bank and canvass for politicians, we join diversity councils at work, join the Gates Democratic Committee and bake cookies for election inspectors. We cook for St Josephs House as part of Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church outreach . WE support everybody we can. But also we make sure people know who we are....

   Hi I'm lesbian...my name is Anne...can I help?

   To paraphrase Gloria Steinem: We can't fix world hunger but we can pick up the garbage in our path. We take the time to talk about marriage equality and LGBT concerns with everyone who crosses our path even intolerant people. We step out of our comfort zone as we try to pull them out of theirs. Again it is about building relationship...not confrontation. TODD PLANK is smiling...

The other big thing we have learned is this: When your baby is crying it doesn't matter how a parent feels or whose turn it is ... you have get up and take care of the baby. So if you make a commitment you follow through no matter what. And if there is a need or opportunity that advances the cause you get up and take care of the baby...(but we gripe about it in private)

Finally I'll share the real secret to our success as <u>activists:</u> People genuinely <u>like</u> Bess and I make good signs...

Bess: And the secret to the success of our <u>marriage</u> is that I let Anne, whom I affectionately call, Attila my Hun do all the talking... Thank you so much and please know that the Gay Alliance is offering speakers training in January, so you too can become Activists.

We want to thank you again... And if anyone here has nothing to do this weekend....

PAUSE, HOLD UP SIGNS (GET OUT THE VOTE!)

Give us a call!